

EDITOR'S NOTES

I have used an editor's privilege and included an article of my own ("Towards Structure"). Since I am a Johnny-come-lately to Radical Statistics, perhaps I may be forgiven for covering old ground. My excuse is provided by Professor Bartlett's point, that redundancy has to be built into writing since readers miss so much. (I must confess that I have not read every article in each newsletter and having been to only one AGM I missed the policy discussions.) The cover is pertinent to my article - I don't say that I am against principles but I am for an organisation which wriggles out of definitions of itself. I leave it at that.

It is usual to announce the next editor and the copy date for the next Newsletter. This I cannot do. But I can ask you to send articles and offers of editorship to Radical Statistics (Newsletter), c/o BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.

The newsletter depends for visual impact upon the facilities open to the editor. I had hoped to do better, but in the end I had to rely on the excellent typing of the contributors. Can I make a plea on behalf of future editors? Type your work on A4 size paper, leave at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " on left and right hand margins, and make sure that your corrections are clear.

Reminders

● When addressing letters to Radical Statistics at Poland Street make sure someone's name is on the front or some qualification is made to the bare "Radical Statistics". (See page 2)

● Do make sure that you have paid something to Rad Stats recently - otherwise this will be your last newsletter. (See page 3)

● Do complete the slip at the end of Liz's article - and send it too! (See page 7)

● Note that Dave Haran's questionnaire is only for those in the Newcastle/N.E. Area (See page 20)

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Mr. Nic Wright,
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1st. April, 1978

Dear Nic ,

I write in response to the letter from John Bibby concerning government forecasts of roads and traffic, which was reprinted in the 12th. issue of RS.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the AGM and so could not have the benefit of the discussion on the topic which the Newsletter said would occur.

However, I would like to raise the point that a great many other official forecasts are heavily imbued with value judgements or are definitely in conflict in their assumptions, with current government policy.

In the field of economic forecasting this is probably so well known as to be a truism, e. g. wildly optimistic rates of economic growth, "inflation down to x% by time t", etc. but it is also true in other, less well known areas.

Take my own field of demography. Official Government Actuary projections to beyond the year 2000 assume certain rates of continued decline in mortality. How does this reconcile with government policy of cutbacks in the NHS, attitudes to geriatric care, etc. A revision was made a few years ago when it became clear that the mortality forecasts were deviating too widely, in an optimistic way, from actual experience.

Again, in fertility forecasting, I am certain that one reason that OPCS has stuck so rigidly to a belief in a forthcoming upturn in the birthrate, over a period when it has declined steadily, is an association between rising birthrates and rising economic prosperity* and vice versa, producing an unwillingness to imply, in forecasts, continuing economic stagnation.

I would very much like to explore the topic of political valuations in forecasts further with RSG members who are better informed than myself in other areas e.g. economic forecasting. Please circulate this letter to anyone who might be interested. My address, until the end of June, will be c/o Beijer Institute, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Frescati, S-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'David R. Cope'.

DAVID R. COPE

* in the minds of forecasters that is, not necessarily in reality.